

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OES-07 DLOS-09 ACDA-07 CG-00
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1531
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6390

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, SP, NR
SUBJECT: VISIT OF MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S
ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFRICAN AND CONTINENTAL AFFAIRS
(CAJAL) CONFIRMED THE INDICATIONS IN THE PRESS THAT THE
ATMOSPHERE HAD BEEN CORDIAL DURING THE AUGUST 22-24 VISIT
HERE OF MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS. IT WAS
NOT SO CORDIAL, HOWEVER, SAID CAJAL, THAT THE GOS HAD
AGREED WITH MOUKNASS REGARDING THE "REUNIFICATION" OF
MAURITANIA (I.E. THE INCORPORATION OF A PORTION OF THE
SAHARA INTO MAURITANIA), AS MOUKNASS HAD IMPLIED IN ONE OF
HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

2. IN FACT, CAJAL SAID, THEY HAD MADE CLEAR SPAIN'S
CONTINUING ADHERENCE TO THE TWO PILLARS OF ITS SAHARA
POLICY, THE MADRID AGREEMENT AND THE SPANISH STATEMENT OF
FEBRUARY 26, 1976 TO THE UN. SPANISH OFFICIALS HAD BEEN
INTERESTED IN RE-AFFIRMING THEIR UNCHANGED POSITION REGARDING
THE MADRID AGREEMENT BECAUSE OF RECENT PRESS SPECULATION
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THAT IT HAD CHANGED OR WAS CHANGING. CAJAL ADDED; THEY HAD
ALSO NOTED TO MOUKNASS THAT SPAIN'S NEW DEMOCRATIC CORTES
COULD COME -- OR TRY -- TO AFFECT SPANISH POLICY IN THIS
REGARD.

3. THE FISHERIES QUESTION WAS A PRINCIPAL ITEM OF DISCUSSION
DURING THE VISIT, ACCORDING TO CAJAL, WHO EXPLAINED THAT THE

1974 AGREEMENT HAD NEVER REALLY GONE INTO EFFECT BECAUSE THE LICENSE FEES DEMANDED BY THE MAURITANIANS HAD SIMPLY BEEN EXCESSIVE AS FAR AS THE SPANISH INDUSTRY WAS CONCERNED. SINCE THE RESULT WAS THAT MAURITANIA WAS OBTAINING VERY LITTLE OF THE INCOME FROM LICENSE FEES THAT WAS ITS PRINCIPAL INTEREST IN SUCH AN AGREEMENT (ONLY SOME FORTY BOATS OF THE ALMOST THREE HUNDRED AUTHORIZED HAD ACTUALLY OBTAINED LICENSES), THE GRIM HAD BEEN INTERESTED IN REACHING A NEW AGREEMENT. (IN THE MEANTIME, ACCORDING TO CAJAL, A KIND OF MODUS VIVENDI HAD BEEN IN EFFECT, ACCORDING TO WHICH ONLY THOSE SPANISH BOATS MOST AGGRESSIVELY VIOLATING THE RULES WERE PICKED UP, WHILE THE REST WERE TOLERATED.)

4. A KIND OF FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT, OR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE, HAD BEEN REACHED WITH MOUKNASS, WITH THE DETAILS TO BE FILLED IN DURING THE VISIT TO MAURITANIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF OCTOBER OF SPANISH TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER LLADO. AS CAJAL EXPLAINED IT, SPAIN WAS TO EXTEND A LOW-INTEREST, 4-5 YEAR CREDIT OF SOME \$15-20 MILLION TO MAURITANIA, TO BE USED IN THREE PRINCIPAL WAYS: (A) UNITED FUNDS; (B) FUNDS FOR THE PURCHASE OF SPANISH GOODS AND SERVICES; AND (C) FUNDS TO MAKE UP TO THE MAURITANIANS THE LOSS SUFFERED BY ACCEPTING SUBSTANTIALLY LOWER LICENSE FEES IN THE NEW AGREEMENT.

5. SPAIN'S INTEREST IN REACHING AGREEMENT WITH MAURITANIA
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HAD VARIOUS FACETS, ACCORDING TO CAJAL. MAURITANIA WAS NOT ONLY INVOLVED IN THE SAHARA QUESTION, BUT WAS CLEARLY THE WEAKEST OF THE THREE CONCERNED, AND SPAIN WISHED TO STRENGTHEN IT. IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF TRIBAL AND EVEN FAMILY TIES, MAURITANIA COULD BE IN A POSITION AT SOME POINT TO REACH SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT WITH THE GENUINELY SAHRAOUI PORTION (WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS A SMALL MINORITY) OF THE POLISARIO. FINALLY, CAJAL SAID, SPAIN WAS OF COURSE INTERESTED IN RELIEVING THE PRESSURE ON THE TROUBLED FISHING FLEET OF THE TROUBLED CANARY ISLANDS. STABLER

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